

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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birth, strove to save the Imperial throne. The key to the situation was in the hands of the Socialists, for if they officially demanded the abdication of William II and were rebuffed, they would withdraw from the Coalition and the Government would fall. He persuaded Ebert and Scheidemann to postpone the demand, and used the breathing space to urge the ruler to save his dynasty by abdication. Hindenburg, however, warned his master that the 'army might go to pieces if this advice were taken, and the Chancellor declined to force his sovereign's hand.

The mutiny at Kiel was the beginning of the end, but William II was resolved to yield to force alone. Even when, on November 8th, the Chancellor at last telephoned: "Your abdication is essential to avert civil war," he refused to move. The threatened revolution in Berlin had been held back from November 8 till November 9, and on that historic day it was a race against time. At 9.15 a.m. the news was telephoned from Spa that the generals were about to inform their master that the army would not support him in a civil war. At 11 a message came that he had resolved to abdicate and that the formula would reach the capital in half an hour.* Meanwhile the workers were pouring into the streets, and the deposition might be proclaimed at any moment. When the half hour elapsed without the promised formula, Prince Max vainly endeavoured to reach the monarch by telephone. As a last chance of saving the monarchy, he announced that the Kaiser had decided to resign; that the Chancellor would only remain in office till the questions involved in the resignation of the monarch, the renunciation of the Crown Prince, and the creation of a Regency were settled; that he intended to propose to the

Regent the appointment of Ebert as
Chancellor and the
election of a Constituent Assembly by universal
suffrage. This
declaration was known at midday, but it came too
late to affect
events. At 2 p.m. Scheidemann proclaimed the
Republic
from the Reichstag building, and the
Hohenzollem dynasty,
after ruling for five centuries, was at an end. A
few minutes
later the promised announcement arrived, in
which William II
abdicated as Emperor but not as King of
Prussia*. This crazy
formula was worthy of the ruler whose short-
sighted obstinacy
had frustrated the efforts of his patriotic
Chancellor to save the
dynasty. A Regency for his grandson might have
prevented
the Nazi revolution, for the republic aroused
little enthusiasm
in what Herder once described as the land of
obedience.